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My Emotional Life

G. A. CHADWICK D.D.

HEART CHORDS.

My Emotional Life.

BY THE

REV. GEO. A. CHADWICK, D.D.,

PREBENDARY OF ARMAGH CATHEDRAL AND
RECTOR OF ARMAGH.

CASSELL, PETTER, GALPIN & CO.

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" Thine eye shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation. . . .
here the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers
d streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither
ıll gallant ship pass thereby."

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SUMMARY.

CHAPTER I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EMOTIONS.

They are universal, 1; concealed, 3; we cannot judge, 4; religion appeals to them, 6; deepest when unconscious, 7; contrasted cases of unconscious feeling, 8; danger of judging, 12; St. Augustine, 12; over-scrutiny, 13; when to examine feelings, 14.

CHAPTER II.

NATURAL EMOTION.

Stoicism, 15; Epictetus, 16; our Lord, 17; bids us "hate" all, 17; the explanation, 18; alleged hardness of St. Paul, 20; his real tenderness, 21; natural sorrows, 22; pleasure, 24; consecration more than innocence, 26; St. Paul's rule, 28; anger, 30; vengeance, 32; its extent, 33; control of emotion, 34.

CHAPTER III.

RELIGIOUS EMOTION.

No institution but the church for inspiring great emotions, 37; base lives, 38; elevated by religion, 39; its power in society, 40; above politics, 41; on the soul, 43; Newman

and Luther, 45; penitence, 46; hope of heaven, 47; relations with God, 55; unselfish emotion, 58; our brethren, 60; the world's future, 61.

CHAPTER IV.

DANGERS OF THE EMOTIONAL LIFE.

Baseless emotions, 64; fanaticism, 65; Buddhism and Mahommedanism, 67; yearning for repose, 72; the divine sufferer, 77; inactive emotion, 79; trust in feeling, 80; alarm at its absence, 85; Leighton and Coleridge, 87; examination of the feelings of others, 88; impatience, 90; Saul of Tarsus, 91; Lydia and others, 92; the illusion of biographies, 93.

CHAPTER V.

THE CONTROL OF OUR EMOTIONS.

Want of feeling sometimes wilful, 94; the Jews and Ezra, 95: an effort to be cheerful, 97; joy is strength, 99; not from nature, 100; nor success, 101; nor natural religion, 102; but from the promises, 103; patience; for joy is a fruit, 106; trust amid despondency: the swimmer, 109; the racer, 111; trust in Christ, 112; Paul in Corinth, 116; the means of grace, 117; the help of the Spirit, 120.

HEART CHORDS.

MY EMOTIONAL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

IMPORTANCE OF THE EMOTIONS.

WE live in a world of various, strong, carefully-veiled emotions. Our feelings are the firmest link which holds mankind—otherwise drifting far apart—together as a band of brethren still. Thousands of workmen press on each other at factory gates: armies march together like one man: lonely watchers gaze out from lighthouses, from prows of ships, from libraries, from dungeons, and, the loneliest of all, from thrones: their lives differ; their intellects are farther asunder than the east is from the west: but anxiety and desire and regret have scored their foreheads with lines which are not unlike; and they have

all felt, or shall feel, the same great cardinal passions, excited by most different objects, but glowing with the same fire.

As a wire thrills with the invisible force of electricity, so do the hearts of the common men whom we meet on the road or in the market, and who seem so impassive, beat fast and heavily with secret and profound agitations—the hope of heaven or of a fortune, the fear of sin or disgrace or the *Gazette*, the love of God or of home or of strong drink, the hate of unrighteousness or of their brothers. No lives are so dull and colourless as those in which these mighty impulses have burned down, or failed from the first to kindle: the poor thin lives which are driven forward by customs, traditions, and decencies, with no strong original propulsions from within the breast. None are so wretched as those where the passions and convictions are at deadly strife—lashed by conscience when the appetites run their course, or dragged into reluctant slavery when they are *overpowered.*

But when is a life so strong and happy as when the emotions and beliefs march forward with united forces, and a harmonious character works out its destiny without inner discords or misgivings?

No applauses nor luxuries nor splendours can so reconcile our nature to its surroundings, and calm the breast, as this sense of inner harmony, when the impulses say "I will," and the conscience replies "Thou mayest."

There is nothing men conceal so carefully as their inmost, deepest emotions. We easily discover with some accuracy the powers, incomes, tastes, aims in life, of our associates; but it is only of our intimate friends that we know the secret feelings, and even then by inference and surmise rather than by deliberate avowals. But it is certain that our emotional life, which is quite as real as our life of action or of intellectual progress, is even more important.

It is not true that a man is what he does, or even what he thinks: often his heart rises far above his occupation; often, again, he sinks

far below his creed. But it might almost be said that if we knew what tides of emotion sway most often to and fro in any bosom, what storms agitate the surface, and what voice can best control their tumult, then we should know the very man.

Above all, we should know his religious condition, and how he stands with God. Is he more depressed by a social repulse or by a sin? more delighted when he achieves an epigram or when he confesses Christ? more moved by the career of a politician or of a saint? When he has fallen, does he mourn rather for his lost self-respect or his dishonoured Lord? When he has resisted evil, is he flushed with triumph, or prostrated with self-effacing gratitude to the Giver of all good?

Only One can answer. For want of this knowledge it is that we can *judge nothing before the time*, since it may be that some penitent wretch is nearer to the kingdom in his abasement than many a self-satisfied holder of great *office in the Church*. It is indeed a solemn and

searching thought—sad, too, but not entirely melancholy—that *many who are first shall be last, and the last first*, since we can only see men's actions, but fail to comprehend the secrets of their hearts. And beyond doubt, an eye sufficiently acute to discover all that passes in a human breast, and a soul wise enough to weigh it, would judge us far more accurately by our emotional life than by our actions. We are equally attached to our friend by the good offices which prove his loyalty, whether they succeed or fail; and we spurn the most successful exertions of a loveless and mercenary child. Even so, He judges not by the outward appearance, but looks upon the heart, watches the sweet or bitter fountains whence the river of our life flows, welcomes a loyal effort, however defeated, as a triumph of the soul, finds a rich service in the patience of obscure and unpraised sufferers, whose only work is to bear torture nobly, and rejects with scorn the golden offerings of the proud.

Nor can we doubt, with inspired psalms and

prophecies before us, that it was the deliberate plan of our holy religion to appeal to the emotions. The *oil of joy* and the *peace that shall flow as a river* are promised to the saints of the Old Testament. In this dispensation *peace and joy* are still more vitally connected with believing; and every system is self-condemned, whatever cold external ceremonial service it may perform, and whatever dreary round of formal duties it may inculcate, which fails to instruct its children to *rejoice in the Lord.* Not such is the purposed outcome of His teaching and His anguish who still bestows upon those who weep first this blessing, that *they shall laugh*, requiting one emotion with another: who taught His persecuted followers to *leap for joy:* and of whom, more than of any great teacher or leader of humanity, we know how He wept softly by a grave, and aloud over a guilty capital, how His soul was *exceeding troubled*, how He *rejoiced in spirit.* All rigid and stoical theories of human life are condemned by the exquisitely natural, easy, and

undisguised movement of the sympathies and emotions of our Lord.

Yet it does not follow, because genuine and wholesome emotion is so precious, that it is very wise to bestow much or constant attention upon our feelings. As there are plants which thrive best when left to nature in their native soil, so the deepest and strongest emotions, good and evil, are always the least attended to, being the least conscious of themselves. A thoroughly proud man is unaware of his disdainful bearing, being pre-occupied with his own perfections. An utterly selfish man is blind to his injustice to his neighbours, having no time to remember rival claims. In the same way, the noblest friendship is cultivated, not by thinking sentimentally about affection, but by contemplating the lofty endowments of its object. Every high quality, in fact, loses some of its elevation when it becomes aware of itself, and is half spoiled when it admires itself.

And hence, strange as the paradox may seem, it is quite possible that the best man and the

worst man living are alike in this one respect, that they are equally far from a distinct consciousness of any religious feeling, nor is it upon such a subject that either will be addressed with advantage.

We can at least think of two men—they are conceivably, if not actually, alive—who have quite forgotten religious emotion, in all its range and scope. In one the unconsecrated life of nature has been so long supreme that he is now unaware of any other, remembering no more his soul's condition than the rate of his pulse. Being *joined to his idols*, he is *let alone*. His *conscience is seared* against remorse and spiritual aspirations, *as with a hot iron*. He may not be an open and headlong sinner: the lust of gains which are not dishonest, or the greed of power which he would not abuse, things blameless or honourable in themselves, may hold that seat in his heart which ought to be reserved and sacred as a throne for God. But wherever anything usurps *that high* place, and the usurpation is undis-

puted, the soul undisquieted, there is the unhappy person we mean. And many a desperate sinner, desperately disquieted, is in a better condition than this tranquil yet miserable man, the flow of whose life is smooth and foamless not because the stream is sluggish, but because the channel is so direct, so free from opposing barriers, that no ripple tells how swiftly it rushes to the fall.

Now, the hard task of stirring emotion in such a breast will not be accomplished by speaking to him of himself and his spiritual torpor. Far other themes, the love of God for man, the work of Christ and the soul's need, holiness, heaven, and the necessary preparation, the dark alternative for those who reject salvation, these are what must break his slumber. It is a very simple mistake to think that any emotion is to be created by speaking about itself, the abstract quality. Emotions are excited only by the solid objects of their desire or hatred. When the spiritual sleeper is really awakened to the eternal facts, his feelings will be keen enough.

but not even then will these feelings be the wisest theme to dwell upon.

We can, however, imagine another soul, as blessedly unconscious of emotion as the first is miserably dead to his want of it. Just as the sweetest-hearted child does not whisper to himself "I am affectionate," but simply loves, so it may be with the child of God. Perhaps the happiest Christian of all may never turn aside from adoring his Father and blessing his Redeemer to reflect on his own blissfulness, and may love to sing, *The Lord is my Shepherd*, and *He leads me in green pastures*, more than to think My emotions are rapturous, my enjoyments are supreme.

The *perfect peace* in which he is kept will depend on the fact that his *mind is stayed on* God, possibly too fervently, too steadily stayed on Him alone to glance aside on his own joys. And his tranquil bosom will resemble less the flow of the arrowy river, smooth on the surface because unhindered in its rush, than that sea of *glassy* surface and fiery splendour which reflects

in its perfect mirror the throne of God and the white linen of the saints too clearly to betray to the gazer the line of its own tranquil level. It is thus, at least, possible that the most devoted saint who ever lived has been so fully absorbed in the contemplation of God and of Christ as neither to sound the abysses of his own enjoyment nor to spend thought upon his personal acquirements. He has *had* the enjoyment, he has grown in spirituality, all the more because his thoughts had passed away from self to things *within the veil.*

Few there are, if any, whose habitual meditations dwell in so pure an air, in such clear, unrefracted light. But many, we may hope, are conscious of moments, and even of hours, when they are uplifted to those sunny heights, and forget self and enjoyment altogether in thinking of Calvary and the sapphire throne. Who would be aroused from such holy pre-occupation, or confused amid the services to which love and gratitude will surely prompt him, by cross-questionings about himself and his emo-

tions? It is better to sing *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain* than to be reminded of my own happiness, my own fervour, anything that is my own.

We have now gained a second step. We said that an eye sufficiently acute to discover all that passes in a human heart would judge men more accurately by their emotional life than by their actions. But we now perceive that men cannot judge themselves after any such fashion. The emotion will be more or less checked and disturbed by the act of observing what it is. In the highest mood we can attain, Hope does not pronounce itself hopeful, Love does not cry out "I am loving," nor Faith declare "I am trustful." They forget, in these perfect moments, to say anything about themselves. "If," said Saint Augustine, "the tumult of the flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth and water and air, hushed also the poles of heaven, yea, the very soul be hushed to herself, and by not *thinking* on self surmount self . . . . and He

alone speak, not through these but by Himself, and could this one vision ravish and absorb and burn up its beholder amid these inward joys, were not this to '*Enter into thy Master's joy?*'" (*Confessions* ix. 25.)

It is not alone in the depths of insensibility, nor on the heights of Christian attainment, that emotion is thus unconscious of itself. The most piercing convictions of a life mis-spent, and the most bitter contrition, do not cry "I undergo the agonies of conviction," and "I am a penitent;" but, looking at facts with eyes free from self-consciousness, they ask, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" "*What must I do to be saved?*"

Great mischief may, therefore, be done by examining too importunately the emotions of a young Christian, or teaching him to question himself too anxiously about their reality and their progress, instead of allowing them to spring up silently, as a fair plant which rises, without abruptness, invisibly, under the gentle influence of the sunshine and the dews.

It is far from the intention of this little book to supply a manual for such cross-examinations. Like the reckoning of one's pulses, and the measuring of one's appetite, they are often morbid, and at best a necessity arising from disease. The Corinthian Church had already fallen far, when St. Paul bade them look anxiously to their own condition, and, instead of asking whether he were a true apostle, since they were suspicious, to suspect themselves—"*Try your own selves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves.*" 2 Cor. xiii. 5, R. V. It was after Peter's threefold denial that Jesus asked him, *lovest thou Me?*

Yet there are dangers to be pointed out, and counsels to be given, by which some believing soul may be saved from perplexity and pain.

The exaggerated stress which is laid upon emotion by many sincere Christians in our time would in itself justify an attempt to state, *with more balance* and sobriety, the true [illegible] *of emotion in the Divine life.*

And the reaction which these overstatements produce in cooler minds will justify an assertion of its real claims.

CHAPTER II.

NATURAL EMOTION.

OUR religion does not profess to extinguish any natural feeling. An ancient philosophy there was, which

> "Strove to wind itself too high
> For sinful man beneath the sky"—

to admire nothing, to be unshaken alike by pleasure and pain. Christianity has solved the hard problem of uniting the stern strength of that stately but loveless theory with the sweetness and tenderness which it ruthlessly sacrificed, but for which unsophisticated natures always long. She has been able to do this by giving us new motives and a stronger love. Stoicism strove to stunt our human nature, be-

cause stoicism had no power to overcome it when full grown. But the faith of Jesus is not afraid to give every innocent tendency its rightful development, provided that He Himself is admitted into the heart, who can control them all, being stronger than the strongest.

"In life behave thyself as at a banquet . . but if thou take none of the things set before thee, but even despise them, thou wilt then be not only a fellow-banqueter with the gods, but a partaker of their power." How strangely do these words of Epictetus contrast with our belief that at the frugal table of man's poor life, God Himself has once been found, not despising its joys and griefs, but consecrating all to be a sort of sacramental food, reminding us of Him. What a difference between the praise of Socrates for regarding life, chains, banishment, poison, the widowhood of his wife and orphanage of his children as only a game, where we care nothing for the ball but entirely for skill of play, and the lesson of the agony of our Master in the garden.

Christ was not a stoic. He concealed neither weariness by the fountain, nor hunger by the fig-tree, nor thirst upon the cross; He loved the youth who failed to follow Him; He marvelled, He rejoiced, He wept, He desired with desire to eat the last passover with His disciples. And as before God He represents us in all our natural emotions, so He has consecrated them all to us on earth.

It is with regard to family life and our domestic affections that Christianity has been most plausibly accused of stoicism. St. Paul is blamed for taking a low and heartless view of marriage, and degrading the position of a wife almost to that of a serf. His words are quoted against us, that *they who have wives should be as they who have none.* And we are even reminded that a greater than Paul declares that no man can be His disciple who *hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters.*

But the very energy of this assertion ought to protect it against such a misunderstanding.

›mes a moment in the Christian life
. that is secular (however innocent in
tract) struggles to make the soul its
stead of Christ's. For such moments
rd saying is preserved, that we may rise
y indignation against anything, the most
less, nay, the most sacred, which would
our Master's throne. Therefore, Jesus
that we must *hate* our *own life also.*
is easily shown that He spoke of critical
urning moments, not of a sullen indiffer-
which we should maintain through life.
he reward for hating our life shall be to
t, which on the opposite theory would be
liction; and we are promised, as a rich
to receive *manyfold more in this life—*
and brethren, and parents, and children.
, therefore, we are plainly taught to value
s; indeed, because Jesus expected these re
ships to be precious that He named ther
with property and life, as imperativ
ng to be sacrificed for *the Pearl of*
r price. But His abhorrence of the

natural use of Corban, His compassion for the widow of Nain, His tenderness for Jairus *and the mother of the damsel*, and for Mary and Martha, His pathetic sympathy when they led him forth to die for the *daughters of Jerusalem*, and especially for the mothers who should envy the barren womb, and, above all, His exquisite care, upon the very cross, for His own mother—all these repel the calumny that Jesus undervalued human hearts, or would weaken the ties which bind them.

The strength of these ties is, indeed, the measure of His supremacy. For if we love Him aright, the time will surely come (since He warns us *there is no man* to whom it comes not) when we shall find the evil mesmerism and serpentine fascination of the world attracting us even in the eyes which are dearer to us than life, and in sacred horror shall thrust aside and *hate* all, even these, who would turn our gaze away from His face of love. Was it not thus that He said once to His disciple, "Get thee behind Me, Satan?"

And what of the teaching of St. Paul? It is true that in a terrible crisis he warned every Christian that his heart must be untrammeled—even *they who had wives* being, in devotion to their Master, *as they who had none.*

Such was the spirit of many a martyr since, whose story it has not prevented from being fragrant with a more than mortal tenderness.

It is also true that in discussing the mutual claims of husband and wife, for men whose very inquiries proved their lovelessness, he could not take the high ground of elevated sentiment, but examined the poor question how far absolute duty coerces an unwilling couple. In this connection his teaching is not "elevated," neither should it be so.

But as a cold and dispassionate judge may be warm and sympathetic when off the bench, this same Paul, who takes upon occasion such low ground, and examines duty with so critical an eye, is like another man when he can give the rein to his own feelings, and allow his own *ideals to* disclose themselves. Then his highest

longing for the Churches which he toiled and prayed and bled for is that their union with Christ may resemble in its dignity that of *a pure virgin* with her lord. Then the love of a husband for his wife should resemble that most chivalrous and devoted love of Him who *gave Himself* for the Church, and was content with nothing less than to *present it unto Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.* Then the earthly idea springs up so easily into the spiritual that, in discussing the human bond, He suddenly finds himself speaking *concerning Christ and the Church*, and is undeterred by this transition from instantly adding the plainest practical injunction.

The utmost tenderness that ever glowed in human hearts could not surpass, in depth or elevation or intensity, the ideal set before us by this noble-hearted man, whom shallow and heedless critics have accused of want of sympathy. We shall never even begin to approach it until we banish the ignoble notion that we may grow in grace by starving our hearts, or

cramping our sympathies, or freezing our affections. In vain, therefore, shall we search the Scriptures for one line or word to justify the notion that it is religious to be cold, or apathetic, or deficient in natural emotion.

On this subject much error is still abroad, to the serious injury of souls. Many a poor widow, among her orphans, bewails her imaginary sinfulness in grieving, as she finds that she must needs grieve, for him who loved and fed them, and in being afflicted by that which is the will of God. Whereas a wise adviser would be troubled if she were cold. It is true that grief may become sinful (as every innocent function of nature, bodily or mental, may) by excess or by rebellious waywardness. But it is certain that callous indifference defeats the very object of affliction, for who would chastise a stone? It is also true that grace has wonderfully triumphed, in special circumstances, not only *amid* afflictions, but *over* them. Souls have come out of the spiritual furnace, as the bodies *of the three Hebrew* children came, not even the

smell of fire having passed upon them. But God is glorified by the sufferings of the martyr James as truly as by the miraculous escape of Peter; and we need not complain if ours be the common lot of endurance rather than security. While we write, the memory is with us of a widow, kneeling by the deathbed of an only daughter, a charming and animated girl, the hope and solace of her age. And this happy girl solemnly charged her mother to remember who was calling her, and actually won from her a promise not to grieve when she was gone. And the mother afterwards told, as something wonderful to herself, that when she saw her darling actually pass away there swept like a flood over her soul so profound a consciousness of the glory of heaven, and of her daughter's happiness in being already there, that she could only kneel down and repeat, again and again, "O, thank God, thank God."

But the story would be incomplete, and the moral would mislead, if it were not added that nature afterwards asserted her prerogative of

sorrow, and that her own days were unquestionably shortened by mourning, very intense, although very resigned and beautiful, for the loss of her last tie to earth. We are not bidden, nor encouraged, to achieve insensibility and call it grace.

The tears of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, the *great lamentation of devout men* over Stephen, the restoration of Timothy lest Paul should *have sorrow upon sorrow:* all these are seals upon the charter of the Church, allowing her to mourn provided it be *not as those who have no hope*; not, therefore, for any loss sustained by *those who sleep in Jesus*, but only for our own separation from them for a time.

Neither should a Christian be insensible to pleasure. God, in whom he trusts, giveth him *richly all things to enjoy.* We shall not respect aright His work if we are insensible to the beauty and the gladness which He has strewn broadcast over His redeemed and reconsecrated world. We shall not understand aright the declaration of His glory by the heavens, and

the revelation of His handiwork by the firmament, unless we gaze with sympathetic gladness, as well as studious earnestness, upon their wealth of splendour. Nay, the mischief will penetrate farther, and we shall not be thankful aright for our redemption itself unless we allow ourselves to feel the present benefit of the removal of our curse, and value every harmless joy as a Divine gift, and an assurance, in the very contrast between its happiness and our desert, of His goodwill towards us. And doubtless, if mankind were really Christian, our life on earth, instead of being drained dry of natural emotion, would have all the channels of true feeling filled with an ampler, as well as a far purer, volume. For then we should learn to be ashamed of nothing that is really human and not misplaced. We should no longer compress within us (and by compressing, how often do we suffocate?) any innocent impulse, nor *call* anything *common or unclean* which is really part of the nature He assumed. We should love the laughter of children, whom He blessed. We

should sympathise with poverty, sickness, and bereavement, to which He ministered. And when our own time of trouble came, we should say, He who is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, pitied and relieved distress. And, in gladness, This is our Master's gift, and comes to us all fragrant from His sacred hands.

Here we may draw an all-important distinction. For we do not say that joys and sorrows, apart from religion, are allowable: we say that all innocent joys and sorrows may rise above innocence to consecration. Jesus is the ruler of this life, having *all power committed to him upon earth* as really as *in heaven*, reigning, and that as man, *until all enemies are put under His feet.*

How would our secular life be transformed, what *a new earth* as well as *new heavens* would be created for us, if this truth, acknowledged by our intellect, were really to grasp our convictions, our imagination, our actual views of life! Then every sorrow would be received as a wholesome medicine from a loving hand, being,

indeed, from the pierced hand of Him who is very Love. We should not deny its bitterness; nor seek to evade, by distractions of the world, or by hardening our hearts, the discipline, however searching, which Christ wills us to endure. But resentment at the burden of our lot would disappear, we should cease to be envious of the wicked, or compare our woes with others; all sense of sternness, all desire to snatch the reins of life and turn the wheels into another path, would entirely melt away. For, O, our Master, the griefs Thou sendest are not *grievous to be borne;* the darkest valley gleams with unearthly light if Thou movest beside us through the gloom. And in the last hour of all, when we tremble and shrink away from the chill touch of the dreaded Angel of Death, we shall see, shining through the veil which hides his awful face, the unfathomable love of Thine own eyes, who hast promised that Thou, and not another, *wilt come to receive us unto Thyself.*

And would not the joys of life be sweeter if they reminded us of the giver?—if they spoke of

His liberal hand, the love of His great heart? To defend our rights against ascetic theories, we readily quote the assertion that *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused.* But why do we less willingly finish the text, and so remind ourselves of our duty? For St. Paul guards his assertion by adding, *if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.* Here we have the three great instruments by which enjoyments are to be controlled and sobered, as a keen flame, too intense for the unprotected eye, is shaded in an opal globe, and moderated without being quenched.

First, it is to *be received with thanksgiving*, and so traced back to its Giver, made a remembrancer and vassal instead of a rival to His claims, and taught to deepen our love to God, instead of tempting us to forget.

Next, it is to be *sanctified by the word of God*, which will both rebuke all tendencies to excess, and teach us to set far above all earthly happiness *the joy of our Lord.*

Thirdly, it is to be mentioned in our prayers. It is there that all feeling may best be searched and proved: self-deceit will there be almost impossible, and the beginnings of excess and the wanderings of desire will nowhere else be so apparent. There, also, our gratitude and loyalty will be saved from exhaling into idle sentiment.

Alas, how far is the average Christian from thus *sanctifying* his secular joys! But how dare we, then, complain of the sadness and the burden of our lives—lives which God loves to crown with flowers, and which would doubtless be made far brighter if brightness were not perilous to our best interests, if that were not true even of Christians which was said of unbelievers, that sorrow is a better teacher than joy?

"Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raised;
And lips say 'God be pitiful,'
Which ne'er said 'God be praised.'"

With other emotions, more perilous than

simple joy and grief, Scripture deals variously, but always with equal wisdom.

The dangers which beset a wrathful heart do not prevent anger from being often allowable, and at times a duty. Grace does not disincline a Christian from holy indignation when the weak are trampled on or principles outraged. Jesus, who is our example, *looked round about Him in anger* which was not inconsistent with pity for men's debasement, *being grieved at the hardness of their hearts.* Nor is there, in all the records of ancient and modern invective, so fearful an example of lofty indignation, inspired not by personal wrongs, but by the profoundest moral antagonism, as that reiterated, burning woe upon the Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, which passes into those words of melting tenderness—*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.* But this burst of tenderness did not prevent

Him from discerning and pronouncing that now their *house is left unto* them *desolate.* Just because Jesus loved and pitied them, He could not fail to be moved to His depths by their hypocrisy, their rapacity, their inward defilement and external whiteness as of a sepulchre. It is easy to restrain our wrath when we are indifferent or contemptuous.

But this is not a highly Christian mood; and there is far less of our Saviour's heart in the cold, cynical temperament which expects vileness and is resigned to it than in the burning heart which cannot behold evil without concern, antagonism, denunciation.

But while we are not forbidden to be angry, we are warned that the time ot anger is especially dangerous, and ought always to be brief: *Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* And we are bidden, moreover, *not* to be *easily provoked*, but *slow to wrath*, remembering that it may crush but rarely converts, *for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

If not when our anger begins, yet when it would develop into private vindictiveness, we are met with a direct prohibition. *Avenge not yourselves.* Not that even vengeance is evil in the abstract, if we were capable of entertaining it without sin. The *souls under the altar* cried in the hearing of the apostle of love, as sternly as any martyrs of the Old Testament, *with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* and there was enjoined upon them not a milder spirit, but patience—*yet, for a little time.* Such a mood, however, is not for us, who are incapable of rightly judging or rightly asserting our own cause. With us, the personal character of a wrong would always suffice to shake the steady hand of justice, and to inflame its cool decisions. Therefore, God, who habitually works by means, has warned us that the constituted secular authorities alone are his *ministers to execute vengeance.*

Now, the obedient Christian (who desires the

grace and blessedness of submission to the spirit as well as the letter of our Lord's commands) will see that this absolute prohibition of private vengeance covers a great deal of ground. It forbids the indulgence of resentful feelings in a biting taunt, an avenging epigram, as distinctly as a blow. It forbids me to repeat the evil deeds of my enemy, and so to lower him in the opinion of a neighbour, unless I am perfectly sure that my real motive is quite other than to injure him. Such another motive there may often be, and my fidelity will be tested when I am tempted to indulge my bad passions under the screen of it. I may have to let one be unto me *as a heathen man and a publican*, and my action may perplex and weaken another if it be not explained. Others may have to be cautioned against a dangerous man. But a meek follower of Jesus will not be ready to speak the irrevocable word. He will give his enemy the benefit of every doubt. And he will find at least a moment for ejaculatory prayer, in which to ask guidance

from that Holy Spirit who has not revealed Himself as an eagle but a dove.

Alas, how many lives would be unblighted how many characters retrieved, how many families reconciled, how many hearts unbroken how many souls won, if we had *all drunk* more deeply *into that same Spirit!*

If religion, therefore, allows much that has sometimes been denounced in her name, she leaves no natural emotion uncontrolled—no deficiency or excess without an appropriate message. Nor is she content merely to command or to condemn anything without suggesting a powerful motive to make her precept easy. When she forbids passion and resentment, she reminds us of Him who *will recompense* watching and redressing all wrongs making even our injuries *work together for our good*, but striving with ceaseless patience to restore the fallen and sinful, and as long as He tolerates any soul, giving us the nobler hope *of its restoration* instead of overthrow, and the

winning of a brother instead of the crushing of a foe. Who would disturb his plans? Who would cry out against the very forbearance to which we, in our turn, owe everything?

If we are angry, we are not confronted by a precept only, but reminded how often we have ourselves been spared by our offended God, and who it is *that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.*

When we are exalted, we are pointed to the humiliation of our Exemplar: when we are brought low, we are bidden to hope to be partakers of His glory.

That life is true and holy, and its emotions are controlled and purified, which is spent in the presence of God, and in view of the earthly life of Jesus. There, as of old, the fever of the soul is cooled, and its storms and waves are stilled. He says to the covetous, *Leave all and follow Me.* To the bereaved He whispers, if not abruptly and imperiously, yet with a tender and consoling power, *Weep not.* In tribulation He says, *Be of good cheer, I have overcome* the

world. Already He loves to *wipe away tears from* our *eyes.* And high above all ag tions gleams the star-like hope that by-and- He shall call us from the calm blessednes his service here to that bliss which only phrase perfectly expresses—into our Mas own infinite bliss, into *the joy of our Lord.*

CHAPTER III.

RELIGIOUS EMOTION.

NOT only does religion thus control and go our natural feelings, it also inspires new deep emotions in the breast of all who hea voice. And this is itself the most powe check on the excesses of those others. Ev one knows that a master passion is like th of Moses which devoured the rest. The *not room within* us for a multitude o *desires or strong* delights ; and as sure

nign and sacred affection rises like a sun our inner world, so surely will the others comparatively dim, as the moon fades and pale at daybreak.

Now, it would be worth considering whe there exists on earth another institution bes the Church of Christ, founded and in ste operation, with the avowed object of purify and deepening men's affections, and direct the actions through the heart of mankind.

The most thoughtful man of letters of t day, discussing suicide, declares that—

> "No life that breathes with human breath
> Has ever truly longed for death.
> 'Tis life, wh[illegible]

more abundantly. These words speak not of heaven, but of the present time; they say that *he who hath the Son hath* already *life, and he who hath not the Son hath not life*, even now. And we profess to believe that Christ is daily bestowing this gift of larger, intenser, and more earnest life all over Christendom.

Now it would be hard to conceive that any more important service than this could be conferred on society in our time. The upper classes, with life at their own disposal, complain of its excessive tedium, and seek, too often in strange places and by strange devices, for any angel to trouble the stagnant waters of existence. And few ever think how monotonous must be the lives of the extremely poor. It startles one to see a mill-girl spending her whole life in turning one wheel (exactly as a squirrel might, except that she works from the outside), and by each revolution measuring a yard of thread. It appals one to think of the absolute colourless identity of hour *with hour,* day after day, for men whom our

vaunted division of labour has doomed to spend years in punching the same hole, stamping the same line, turning the same stopcock, adjusting the same band. No wonder that the pleasures of their enervated evenings need to be highly spiced, that the ribald song, and the breakdown dance, the gin-palace, and the coarse drama and the coarser tale are popular, and that, at frequent intervals, some far-resounding tragedy of mortal passion alarms us with its fearful explosion of energies too long confined, like steam without a safety-valve.

Surely it is not least among the benefits of the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations that religion brings relief, brightness, movement, enjoyment to these piteous lives, flushing their dry watercourses from the river of God, which is full of water. It is a strange revolution of feeling for a factory "hand" to discover that he is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ. And if millions of our poor people are still God-fearing, law-abiding, and loyal, that is surely because the heavy cloud

which broods incessantly over our great cities is still illuminated by some rays from the Sun beyond the skies.

Innocent amusements for the working classes, sound literature for the working classes, harmless places of social resort and leisure for the working classes—all these are good. But behind them all there is something to be considered far more essential:—How shall we give them, amid a ceaseless, grinding routine, with little change during manhood and less prospect for old age, high-minded aspirations and emotions pure and full? There is only one method, and that is by leading them into the way of holiness, in which the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err.

Sometimes, indeed, we hear language that seems to say that we have failed. It is said that men are alive to every other interest, but asleep and even dead to this. And in one sense this is sadly true. The complaint expresses our deep conviction of the commanding and supreme place which religion ought to have

in every heart, and our feeling that any indifference to this transcendent interest is monstrous and infatuated. Few, indeed, yield to it its due place.

But look at things in another aspect. Consider the effect of religion upon our literature and our politics, the cleft which is opened by division upon this one subject all down society from top to bottom in our islands, the pious buildings and institutions of Great Britain, and the vast sums contributed for religious objects every year, and it becomes plain that people in general, however careless compared with what they ought to be, and they are ruinously so, are not absolutely indifferent about religion.

What is the most exciting interest which ever agitates the British nation? Men of experience would almost unanimously answer that it is a general election. They would say that at no other time could such masses of men be congregated, or such interest in one question be spread so far and widely, or so much oratory so patiently endured, or so much money freely

spent for any public object. But they would be entirely wrong. More people are collected in our churches regularly, and as a matter of course, than ever gather around any platform; and the interest reaches women and children who scarcely know what the watchwords of our parties mean. The flood of wise and foolish discourse on religious subjects, poured forth incessantly by professional teachers and volunteers, staggers the imagination. Did ever a political enthusiast dream of bringing his audience together by the attraction of one theme, weekly for years? How many halls available for such a purpose divide the landscape with our church spires? How many political songs have reached the popularity of scores of hymns? Nay, during the hottest fit of that extremely intermittent fever, an election, an insult to religion, really felt as such, would be ruinous to any statesman however popular, and any party however powerful.

The influence, therefore, of religion upon the *public mind,* upon the very masses, is really

greater than even the enormous influence of politics; and it is a constant pressure, while the other is extremely fitful.

Now, this is highly important to observe, for several reasons. If we cannot and dare not hope that all these multitudes are experimentally enjoying a new life in Christ, we must see that religion demands yet more, so that to care a good deal about our Church, to be excited when sacred questions are at stake, to have decided opinions and to fight for them is not enough, for we share all this with multitudes of workers of iniquity. The religion of Christ ought to impress us, to move and thrill us, far beyond this—how much more we may best judge by the strong phrases which compare the child of God to a living man among corpses, once dead but now alive, *born again*, *born of water and the Spirit.*

And the question is all-important to every soul—am I actually living a new life to-day? It is a small thing in comparison how we believe the germs of that life to have been

implanted. Whether grace controlled the very dawn of our consciousness, as the sun begins to colour the pale blade of the infant plant; or whether we can point to a definite crisis when our will was yielded up to God—these are matters entirely apart from this. For all must agree that life does not consist in having formerly been born; it is an active, breathing reality, or it is nothing. Am I, in fact, then, leading any higher life than a pagan philosopher might conceivably live? Is my life visible to all, superficial, checked perhaps here and there by a Scriptural precept, but yet, in its main current, obedient to the motives of the world, hoping and fearing the world's hopes and fears, like a stream which chafes about a rock or eddies a moment in a pool, but yet pushes unceasingly forward to the sea? Or can I put an intelligible, honest meaning for my own experience upon the words, *Your life is hid?*. Everything depends on this. For it is not written that honest and moral men of *the world* shall spend eternity among the

angels. There is a difference between mild respectability and *meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.* It is not the same thing to be a useful citizen and to be *an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ.* Nor can we bridge over the gulf between these two ranges of idea simply by coming to Church, by fighting the battles of our Church party, by holding religious trusts, and sitting on charitable committees.

Such reflections may easily be dismissed as enthusiastic, fanatical, or puritanic. But in so doing, one really dismisses Christianity itself, of which there has never been one effective teacher, ancient or modern, in a reformed or unreformed Church, who would not set his seal to the assertion that the difference between the world and the Church, between respectability and religion, must be vital. On this point, Cardinal Newman and Luther are at one. "Polished, delicate-minded ladies," writes the former, in a passage otherwise very painful, "with little of temptation around them, and no

self-denial to practice, in spite of their refinement and taste, if they are nothing more, are objects of less interest to the Church than many a poor outcast who sins, repents, and is with difficulty kept just within the territory of grace. "St. Paul," says Luther, "holds all the works of the law, and all that the law requires, without Christ, dangerous and hurtful."

If, therefore, any one supposes that mankind has reached a stage when the visible external difference between social blamelessness and Christian discipleship is but little, it is all the more needful on that account to seek for a supreme difference within, in the desires, tendencies, and emotions, all that lies behind the veil which hides each man from his fellows. For a transcendent difference somewhere there must assuredly be.

Now, all the teaching and discipline of a Christian tends, more or less directly, to stir his heart and to develop and purify his feelings.

1. At the very outset, there is penitence. Cases are on record of fearful struggles, when

the sense of guilt, the fear of damnation, burned like devouring fire. Others have been haunted by a longing for purity and inward repose, which gently attracted their homage to the Prince of Peace. In the happy few for whom the drawings of grace have been effectual from early consciousness, perhaps the sense of inward discords to be reconciled is all but merged in gentle submission of the will, and adoring gratitude to the Redeemer. But in other cases, assuredly the heart is drawn away from sullen indifference or complacent self-assertion; the consciousness of another deeper life than that of nature dawns upon the mind, warms the desires, affects the will. And whether fear begins the work or unsatisfied desire of holiness, it is always Christ Himself who meets and satisfies the want. The faithful Christian is one into whose heart our Lord Jesus has spoken peace.

Now, let us grant that the emotions of one soul are not to be measured by the standard of another. An Englishman will defy danger at

which a Hindoo shudders, and a Hindoo will face death, when it is certain, with a composure which we cannot emulate. Why should not the same difference prevail in men's spiritual excitability? Some worshippers are highly demonstrative; others, equally sincere, are strangely impassive and self-possessed. But, whatever share of placid or excitable emotion I possess, surely it must be stirred by the discovery that all earthly concerns are nothing compared with the vast prospects, forfeited and lost, which now disclose themselves—that I deserve my ruin, and have accomplished it—that all my loss, and more, is again bestowed on me as a free gift—that throughout my life, unknown, unheeded, or rejected, the deepest of all hearts has yearned over me with the warmest of all loves, attested by the most pathetic and effectual of all sacrifices—that upon the throne of the universe is my Father, pledged to guide me now by His counsel, and to receive me afterwards into His glory;—and all through the Christian's course, every sin and every neglect, when

repented of, confessed, and pardoned, should renew in him the same feelings.

The whole life of the Christian is, therefore, in the best sense, emotional.

We shall see presently that he ought not to measure his security by the state of his feelings. But, surely, we must feel that no Christian ought to be affected more powerfully by the success of our armies, or the state of the share-market, or his own business or farm, than by gratitude to *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies and the God of all comforts.* Surely, the whole Church needs to cry loudly for more thankfulness, softer hearts, a warmer sense of our incalculable debt, and God's inexhaustible forbearance.

2. *We look for a city that hath foundations.* Does it not seem impossible to believe in heaven without emotion if we think of it not as a beautiful romance, a day-dream, a refuge from the hard realities of life, but as itself more real than all else—a solid fact beyond this world.

of fleeting appearances, waiting to reveal itself, cliff-like, in palpable majesty when life has passed like an exhalation?

A real and earnest thought, even of death, is so rare as to be startling. Commonplace though it be to say that we must die, it is solemn enough, at night, before one sleeps, to close the eyes, to place the hands along the sides, to lie in the attitude in which we shall at last be laid, and to bid our thoughts go forward to the time when we shall not rise up again, when all shall be over, and our ambitions shall be ours, and our loves ours, no more. No one tries this little experiment for the first time, and seriously, without feeling a dreamy sense of repose, and yet a plaintive, vague half-pity, and being aware of a change in the relative value of many things, as objects shift their bearings towards each other when seen from a new angle.

Even such a thought moves the emotions and melts the heart. But it is a greater thing to *project* the mind still forward, and say, "Well,

then, let these go past: for when all such concerns are over, when a weed shall bloom from dust that I shall be—nay, when the whole world shall have been consumed in 'the fire that burns up fooling,' I shall be safe in a home which is already prepared." Death is the death of anxiety, of pain, of degradation, of temptation, and of toil; but it is not the death of me: it is but an event in my life, even the close of all my travail, the laying down of my cross, the end of ignorance, and distress, and baffled longing, the opening of the golden gates which admit to new avenues of endless progress

How are men vexed, as with evil dreams in haunted chambers, by forebodings of the decay of their faculties, the insecurity of their prospects, the decline of their influence, the loss of relatives, and the estrangement of friends! And we, who aim at a higher life in a less clouded atmosphere, sometimes blush for shame to hear an inner question "*Where is your faith?*" and to find ourselves weak as other men. Ah, why are we not comforted by

the knowledge of an eternity (far beyond this brief parenthesis of change and trial), where *we shall know even as we are known*, where *treasures wax not old*, where no slander hisses, no false heart forgets.

We read enough about the palace of God to fill us with adorable expectation of amplest dignity and most intimate, homelike love. If simple souls are in danger of feeling somewhat lost in the splendid city of God, where the ramparts are gems and the streets gold, where the river of life rolls down between avenues of immortal verdure, where the translucent sea reflects the image of white-robed harpers and golden harps—if we somewhat fail to rise to the glory of eternal noon, eternal Sabbath, and eternal song, then we are reassured by words of the homeliest comfort, such as tell how *the Lord God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;* how their clothing shall be *white and clean;* how *the Lamb shall feed them and lead them*, and God *shall spread His tabernacle over them;* and how a new name of

sacred endearment shall be whispered into every ear.

Is it possible that faithful men and women should read such words with any thought without having many a sordid longing purged away, many a hidden meanness put to shame, the whole tenor and tendency of our emotions searched and purified, yet made to be far brighter and deeper than before, and brought to resemble that crystal sea of which we read that it is pure as glass, and yet bright and intense as fire?

Perhaps the dulness of our feeling about heaven is due in part to the uncertainty how much is literal, how much symbolical, in the accounts of it. But the symbols of Scripture do not mislead; so far from exaggerating, they are meant to help the mind in straining upwards to something higher, which cannot in its exactitude be reached as yet—*unspeakable things which it is not possible for a man to utter.* By them we apprehend what as yet we cannot comprehend. Each epithet means, therefore, what it says, or

else something still brighter and happier; and as we read each glowing phrase, we ought to say, "This, or some unknown glory in this direction, is held out to me."

It is rightly urged that we must not make heaven gross or carnal, and that our bodies shall be *spiritual bodies*, raised after the likeness of the glorified body of our Lord. Bodies, however, they shall be, and heaven should affect us not only as an impalpable condition—a state of beatitude—but as a home, once the abode of angels and purely spiritual existences alone, but now modified to suit our compound nature—a place prepared by Christ for us.

The promise of heaven was not given by Christ to dying men that they might pass out of life resignedly; although He drew solace for His fellow-sufferer upon the cross, and, doubtless, also for Himself, from the assurance that they should be that day in paradise.

It was to His people in the prospect of a long and lonely trial, when He should have *passed from* them in disgrace and anguish—

when they should have failed to own their Lord —that he presented the consolation, first of faith in God and in Himself, and then of the *many mansions* in His *Father's house*, the place made suitable for human hearts and human longings by His human sympathy and love.

Here, then, is a source of emotion at once the purest and most practical. We know there is room for us, since there is room for all; *the gates thereof* are *in nowise shut* throughout their unending day. But we also know that *whatsoever defileth shall in nowise enter into it;* and so the hope which it inspires is not a beautiful reverie, but an active longing for purity of heart and holiness of life, to *wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

3. Religion is a sure source of noble feeling, as bringing us into close relations with God Himself. It is impossible for us really to pray without having our whole emotional nature expanded and enlarged in the very act. Men complain that with them it is not so: they still find themselves so dull, so poverty-stricken, so

earthly. But why do they so much resent the dulness? What is this within, which cries out against the penury of their souls, and despises the earthliness they have not yet escaped? It is the after-glow of having been near God.

As we are beginning to recover when we feel how weak we are, after lying long too ill even to be aware of our prostration, so is the soul beginning to expand when it complains of being dwarfed and stunted.

Shall not the untutored labourer, whose whole life is wasted over some dismal task, or the child of poverty and disease, to whose sordid and lonely chamber death is visibly nearer every day, be exalted and dignified as he enters again and again the presence of the King of Angels? But what Christian comes thither without feeling that all his life without God was even such a dismal task, and the world such a chamber of death, compared with that *high and lofty place* where the soul enters to commune with God?

To the lonely, the unhappy, the heart which

treachery or death has left bitter and dry and friendless, no earthly change can be imagined so great as that of speaking day and night the simple words "Our Father"—speaking them into an ear which really hears, which is indeed Fatherly, and yet the very ear of God. And it may be questioned whether so great a revolution will be wrought at last, by entering finally the immediate presence of God, Whom the soul has long known and trusted, as that which has been wrought already, when a loveless and joyless creature, shut in between the narrow limits of our commonplace life, and tormented by remorse, throws himself, with a rush of awakening confidence, and hope of purity, and joy of pardon, into the open arms of Christ, and beholds the narrow walls which confined his little hopes thrown down for ever, and eternity opening before him.

> "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until death tramples it to fragments."

So complained the unbelieving Shelley. For the Christian, it is not death who shatters the dome, but communion with God which renders it transparent, and brings immortality to light.

The emotions thus awakened will be increasingly unselfish and exalted. One may begin with dread of punishment and a self-interested desire for pardon, since Christ rejects not even the slavish souls who are scourged to His footstool by their fears. And he who is thus forgiven may at first approach the mercy-seat only as his wants and dangers urge him thither. The Lord does not find us highminded and unselfish. But He means to make us so. And as surely as there is any Holy Spirit to lead the servant of Christ up the ladder which is planted on the earth, but reaches to heaven itself, so surely there will soon be felt in that poor heart some pulse of uncalculating loyalty, some far-off suspicion that God is Himself still better than His heaven, and to behold His face in righteousness than to stand upon the sea of *glass,* some perception that Christ is not alone

a Friend whom we may trust and the Bread of Life to provide for our needs, but also the living embodiment of all ideal grace, all exquisite perfection, a star to make our darkness beautiful, *the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely;* so that he who begins to work because he cannot have the crown without the cross, and wonders to find that *the commandments are not grievous*, learns at last that life is too cheap a gift, and death too little to defy, for *Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood.*

Shame on us that our hearts are not filled to overflowing with emotions far deeper than mere happiness—with burning loyalty, with a passion of gratitude, with a trembling and adoring love which *many waters cannot quench, neither can the depths drown it!* But even to feel the shame is something. Thank God that we know of possibilities, high above us, to pray for and obtain.

Let us add that this nearness or approach to God is united with profound and reverential

awe. The sense of His greatness does not lessen as the Christian grows in grace; it increases. For we owe admission entirely to the merit of our Intercessor, and as our thought of Christ gathers new dignity and preciousness, His holiness growing more intensely white, His self-sacrifice more astonishing, His love more pathetic, so does the gulf between God and His creature appear more profound, which can only be spanned by such a bridge.

4. Again, religion produces high emotions by its brotherly-kindness. Even when we enter into the closet and shut the door, and are alone with God, and call Him by the great name of Father, we are not free to pronounce that word until first we have spoken that other word which connects with our prayer the Holy Church throughout all the world. He is not My Father by virtue of any exclusive monopoly; in the New Testament none ever called Him so but the only Son, whose claim is unique and peerless, who never puts Himself on our level by praying to our common Father

as such. But He allows His followers to stand upon no special platform; and He bids us *love one another. Ye when ye pray say, Our Father.*

When crowds of men are inspired with the same impulse, each feels it more than any could have done alone. Even in solitude, to think that other hearts are animated by the same emotion, resting on the same belief, fired by the same enthusiasm, is a strengthening and exhilarating consciousness. Therefore, Christ has bound His people together in one communion and fellowship, and taught us to reflect that our warfare and hope are shared by *a great multitude whom no man can number*, from the foam of Niagara to the coral islands of the south.

5. Once more, there is the emotion of unselfish hope. Some time, despite superstition and unbelief and sin, the world shall be won for Christ. His glory is already real, and His people know it; but false lights dazzle multitudes, and too often mislead the very footsteps

of the saint. But the hour of his victory shall strike; the desire of the Church for a golden age, not to be won by science or education or commerce, but by the unveiling of the face of Jesus, shall be fulfilled; and if we see not in the flesh that last and crowning triumph, in spirit we already behold it and rejoice.

"Amid wrong and ravage and bloody and tyrannous powers,
We dream of it now, another empire than ours;
But the trumpet shall blow; the reign of the strong shall cease,
And the palm and the sceptre be thine, O Prince of Peace."

Just now a great gloom seems to be settling down upon the public heart. Our youths are not dreaming, like those of thirty years ago, of the perfecting of the species, or the furling of all battle-flags in the parliament of men. Those dreams are over. But the hope of the Christian religion is as steady as the pole star in the tempest which is quenching, one by one, all the lamps of earth.

Here, then, are sources of emotion which must, and do, influence every Christian man. His private feelings may vary; so does a man's cheerfulness at his fireside. Yet a loving home *is* happiness, even to him who is sometimes moody, sometimes sad. And despite occasional discouragement and gloom, it is impossible to meditate habitually without large, and full, and noble emotions upon sin and pardon, heaven, God and Christ, the brotherhood of man, and the victory of the cross.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME DANGERS OF THE EMOTIONAL LIFE.

As there are special perils alike of the active and intellectual faculties, and Satan tempts us at one time to wilful deeds, and at another to presumptuous speculations, the life of religious emotion also has its conspicuous dangers.

1. *Feelings may be first excited and afterwards relied upon, to which one has no real claim.*

In the great parable of the seed falling upon various soils, our Lord only mentions one immediate emotional result. It is only of the shallow hearts which are doomed to blight when the hot sun of internal affliction or external persecution dries them up that He says they *straightway with joy receive it*, they *straightway receive it with joy*, they *receive the word with joy*—all three narrators dwelling on their premature and ill-omened excitement. Yet how few teachers would perceive the lurking danger of such hasty gladness. It is quite possible, then, but no sign of a real work of grace, for men to snatch eagerly at the consolations of the Gospel, to be glad in the thought of a Father and of heaven, without having been humbled by any real sense of sin, without seeking for any penetrating work of grace, without making that self-surrender, in exchange for which Christ is given. Our Lord

is very careful to warn men against supposing that they can be his disciples without spiritual self-crucifixion. He teaches us that one may sit down to claim share in the feast of God, not asking to be excused like others, but promptly and readily presenting himself in the banquet-hall, and not expelled until the King Himself comes in to see the guests, who, after all, has no excuse to make when asked how came he in thither, not having on a wedding garment.

Now, this is the explanation of all fanatical delusions. Men who have neither renounced their sins nor mortified their pride, nor accepted the righteousness of faith instead of the impulses of nature, persuade themselves that they are the favourites of heaven. And being, of course, heartily glad and proud of such prospects and such a distinction, they forthwith take their exalted feelings for sufficient evidence of their religious welfare. They push the Gospel morality aside, and scorn the humility which goes with all true religion as surely as the perfume with the violet. Every motive now

conspires to keep alive the flame of their excitement. Joy, self-confidence, the notion of supernatural help—all work together like wind and tide to carry them to great lengths of exertion and success. Some of them will at last claim, very loudly and confidently, not only to have dwelt where Jesus ate and drank, but to have *cast out devils and done many wonderful works* through His name. Nor will the claim be contradicted: it will simply be set aside as irrelevant, because they were *workers of iniquity.*

It is all-important to remember that religious emotion is entirely worthless unless it is accompanied with submission to the mind and will of Jesus, and a growing likeness in character and life to Him, graces of which any prayerful soul can judge who looks for the help of God the Holy Ghost that he may not only feel happy but think aright. Whatever spirit or impulse within us would dispense with these, or supersede that Blessed Spirit who inspired the homeliest precept, may thrill and charm us when it speaks, but yet is *a deceiver and an Antichrist.*

Joy cannot of itself prove us to be regenerate, because joy will naturally follow the close of any protracted season of suspense, and the sudden flow of the long-perplexed convictions and persuasions down any channel whatever. Like the deep, smooth chaldron of dark waters under a cataract, there is even said to be a period of strange calmness after the committing of a long-premeditated crime, when the resistance of the will is at an end, and the relief of a fina decision has been reached, while remorse has not yet awakened.

It is certain that merely natural religion can often give to impressible minds a sort of emotional satisfaction. The noble-hearted founder of Buddhism could show the spot where, in the act of embracing a system practically atheistic, he attained a peace, in which "sufferings fall off a man like rain-drops off a lotus-leaf." It is almost certain that Mahommed was a sincere fanatic at the beginning of his strangely-mixed career, when his doubts and fears were all removed by a supernatural voice.

Nor is it very long since a leading teacher of scientific atheism died with the words upon his lips, "Beautiful, beautiful, how beautiful no tongue can tell!"*

It is, therefore, high time to give up the shallow assertion that our religion proves its divinity by merely giving peace. We must go on to consider the quality and bases of our Christian peace; its practical results must be weighed, its harmony with the deepest instincts of our nature must be searched out, and its alliance with duty, when duty is calling us to climb the steepest heights of holiness, must be observed. Then only will this argument free itself from any suspicion of sympathy with fanaticism, and from danger of perversion to the service of meaner causes; and the true *peace of God* will be seen to rise above all that is merely human,

* No special case like this, however, can weigh against the general rule. Whatever his mysterious words can have meant, it is plain that human nature, in such a case, will usually shudder to think that this ineffable beauty must now be lost *for ever.*

as high as heaven above the loftiest mansions upon earth.

2. There is risk that *a feeling which is merely human and sentimental should be mistaken for a work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart.* Romance and yearning may be put into the room of grace.

But the mere existence of soft and tender emotion tells nothing of the soul's health. One who listens in a susceptible mood to exquisite music, or reads some lyric where the soothing cadence matches the melancholy words, will naturally be profoundly affected, whether the music or song be sacred or profane. Moonlit waters, landscapes dim in the sunset, and the moan of summer winds have a strange and subtle power which is by no means proportioned to our growth in spirituality, but to the pensive quietness of our habit. Wordsworth even tells us that the meanest flower that blows could stir him almost beyond tears.

Upon shallower natures the same effect will be produced by a mournful tale, or by the

declamation of an actress. But there is no merit, whatever culture there be, in such emotions. Monsters of cruelty have been even absurdly sensitive to the sorrows of poetry and the stage, and have loved to caress a favourite animal, as a tigress has been known to fondle a rabbit given her to devour. Nero was a fine musician, and deified his horse. When one of the most notorious of the French revolutionists insulted and mocked the entreaties of a wife that he would spare her husband, and the poor creature, in her agony of distress, trod upon his lapdog, he was not really a model of compassion because he cried out in a fury, "Madam, have you no humanity?" His luxurious emotion, too soft to endure the outcries of a whelp, was unmoved by the anguish of a woman and the blood of hundreds of his countrymen.

Now, it is important to remember that large portions of Scripture may be read with enjoyment and emotion exactly similar to what a romance or a poem inspires. Men who *hear, but do not,* may feel them like *a very lovely song*

of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well upon an instrument. We may be affected by the sorrows of Job or Jeremiah exactly as we are by the desertion of Dido, or the bitter bread and the steep stairs of Dante's exile. Jacob mourning for Joseph, or David for Absalom, may have just such power over our tears as when the old man breaks his heart over the martyred body of Cordelia.

Observe that none of these emotions is blameworthy—nay, it is a real loss to be devoid of them; but as yet they have not attained any religious significance whatever. The Scripture narratives are *written for our admonition*, and their beauty sweetens the lesson; but we are no more pious when we read them for the mere sake of their beauty than when we study a sacred picture without a thought beyond the art of it.

Nay, we must carry the same principle a great deal farther. Our emotions may be very personal, our own longings and desires may take a highly Scriptural form, and yet they may not

be at all religious, though they have clad themselves in sacred drapery.

No one calls the *Lotus Eaters* a sacred poem. There is nothing religious in the words—

> "Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
> And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
> While all things else have rest from weariness?
> All things have rest; why should we toil alone,
> Nor ever fold our wings
> And cease from wanderings,
> Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm?"

Yet it may be, and very often perhaps it is, only this same sentimental tedium, this shrinking from life with its battles and burdens which delights to think of another place of repose, as vague, unrealised, and far away as that in which it seemed always afternoon, murmuring to oneself, without a thought of purity or God, *There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest: there the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor.*

Let us remember that there is no more holi-

ness in longing for the perfect quietude of unruffled, sensuous repose in a Christian paradise than in a pagan elysium; the palm is in itself as earthly as the asphodel; and Jerusalem the Golden, with milk and honey blest, may be desired in a mood as unconsecrated as ever dreamed of the quest of El Dorado. Nay, it would be quite possible to preach an impressive sermon about heaven, and the charms which raise it above earthly mansions, and to inspire an average congregation with that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts bring sad thoughts to the mind, without suggesting one emotion more exalted than discontent with our prosaic life, latent impatience at *the sweat of the brow* in which we must now *eat bread*, tremulous longings for an easy existence in a land of music, and splendour, and repose, and a dim unpractical conjecture (too like a day-dream to resemble faith), that perhaps we ourselves may yet, by some undefined good fortune, attain the crown and the harp of gold. What sanctifying effect could there be in emotions which went no

farther than this? No more than in the sigh of some foolish girl over a romance, that she also might prove to be a princess, changed at nurse.

One may try the real value of such thoughts by a very simple test. Are the emotions which heaven really produces in me those which I willingly confess to God? Upon my knees, if I am honest with my Lord and show Him all, I shall quickly learn whether it is revolt against active duty, or even downright indolence, which wears so attractive a disguise. For we know ourselves better than we are aware. In the immediate presence of the Holy One, we recoil from a great deal that seemed excellent while we were alone, and often blush to confess that which we secretly boasted as a merit.

But woe to me if I am uncandid even in prayer, and profess a desire to be with Jesus, and to *behold the face* of God *in righteousness*, when my real longing is only for the leaves of healing, and the shore of the crystal sea.

Even for genuine goodness there is a desire

which rises no higher than sentimental reverie, since wishing to be good is quite different from actually being good, or even striving, with any practical vigour, to be good. Idle men wish idly that they were industrious. Dull men have a dull desire for brilliance. It is quite to be expected then, that the children of pious households, haunted by solemn beliefs and by searching recollections, should wish very sincerely that they were themselves religious, living up to their convictions. And not these only, but all who hear of a secret happiness and an indwelling peace, and who are wretched and unrestful, must desire to share such blessings. To wish for happiness and peace is just as natural as to wish for an estate; but labour is necessary to obtain wealth, and sin must be renounced to enjoy blessedness. Yet one can scarcely help thinking that he is not very bad so long as he sighs and frets because he is no better. But the question remains, What sort of sorrow is this of mine? Is it that hunger and thirst after righteousness of which our Master spoke—

a mighty pain which will not let me rest until it is removed? Or is it a passing, half-romantic wish, like that which every soldier feels to be a hero, every undergraduate to take first honours? Alas, the soldier spares himself one risk to-day, and the student remits one hour of his intended reading, and so they will naturally do the same to-morrow. So does the religious dreamer postpone his new life, day by day, until he dies. It was thus, for a sedative to his uneasy conscience, that Balaam murmured that model of all unpractical aspirations, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* And, doubtless, the recreant prophet afterwards felt himself to have returned to a religious frame of mind, and was consoled because, despite his sin, such excellent feelings had not forsaken him. But in truth he had only proved himself an accomplished sentimentalist, sighing musically after that for which he never meant to strive, as he schemed for the wages of unrighteousness. Satan will not be alarmed as long as our emotional life wastes

itself in regrets that we are not good now, or even in wishes that we may die righteous.

It is a more solemn and startling question, whether men do not sometimes approach the very cross of our Lord, with emotions which are real enough, without being truly religious, or leaving the soul any purer, any holier, any nearer to Jesus than they find it.

Amiable men cannot think of suffering, especially the unmerited sufferings of an exalted personage, without deep feeling. Now, the sufferings of which they cannot but hear most, the least-deserved, the keenest and noblest of all, must appeal more than any to their susceptibilities. If I am affected by the involuntary recoil of André from the gallows and Danton from the scaffold, I must be far more deeply moved by the holy and yet terrible struggle in Gethsemane against terrors, how much more spiritual, more profound. If I admire the Spartans, when all was lost, combing their hair to sup with the immortals,

much more should I admire Him who, *knowing all the things that were coming upon Him went forth.* If I am shaken all over by the heroism of so rough-hewn a martyr as John Brown (and some can never read the story of his last days without tears), how should we feel the grandeur and the tenderness with which his Master *endured the cross, despising shame*? The tragedies of history can show nothing more sublime than St. Matthew's account of the crucifixion, or more pathetic than St. John's.

O, shame on the hard and callous heart which, because we have heard of that piercing anguish and unquenchable love before, listens now without a tremor, without a quickened pulse! It is the highest achievement of literature; and it records the highest achievement of humanity. But admiration for this heroic gentleness, and even despair of raising our own lives to this ideal, are emotions which involve neither belief nor consecration. They might be entertained by an atheist: they might leave him unpurified as well as unconvinced.

We have sore need to remember, both in the pulpit and the pew, that enthusiastic sympathy for an august sufferer is not the same as trust in a Redeemer, or personal gratitude for benefits received from Him.

3. But it is not merely because men take that to be religious which is only natural that they rest content with unprofitable feeling. *Every feeling, good or bad, which does not lead to something beyond itself, drugs the energies and weakens the will.* If I lavish my sensibilities on sorrows which I cannot cure, I shall be too likely, while dreaming of the relief of dark continents, to neglect my neighbour in the next street. If I stand and clamour for help for one whom I see in danger, without running any risk or making any effort myself, I shall henceforward be still more cowardly, more dependent on others than before. Every clergyman is aware that the parishioner who gushes with the most excited enthusiasm over each religious movement in its turn—the statements of returned missionaries,

the appeals of fervid evangelists, the new prophetic theory, the sweet memoir—is not he who toils hardest in the neglected district, and gathers and gives most, in proportion to his means, for a collection. And why not? Because it would require superhuman energies to do both. Because our powers of imagination and of sympathy are limited, though quite enough when economised and directed aright to make us energetic Christian men and women. What I waste of them I cannot use: the steam which an engine blows off so noisily will never help to impel a train. Now, the natural tendency of all feeling is towards exertion; when I pity, I want to help; when I am indignant, to correct. But every idle and slothful emotion breaks the strength of this natural tendency, gives me the habit of feeling and yet sitting still, and thus cuts the sinews of one of the most powerful impulses, which ought to issue in unselfish action.

4. *We are in danger of turning to our feelings, when they are genuine, for encourage-*

ment. It is so natural to look back, in hours of gloom and depression, upon some happier time when *the candle of the Lord shined upon our head, and the secret of God was upon our tabernacle.* It seems so reasonable and safe to build our confidence upon such memories, to argue hat I am still safe—a Christian, having once *tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come*, and to satisfy the hunger of to-day with some remainder of the manna which fell yesterday instead of claiming share in that fresh supply which falls daily around all the camp of God. And thus we glide inadvertently into self-reliance, into belief in our own acquirements, our own sensibilities, into a habit of looking to what we have ourselves experienced, instead of what Christ has wrought for us. Or, rather, we blend the two. We do not rely entirely upon the promises and their Author, but on the confirmation and sanction of them by our poor acquirements. These give us, we come to think, a sort of claim upon our God.

Now, there is some cause to fear that this mistake is common. It would, indeed, be most unreasonable to attribute a false confidence to all who use misguiding language, since in religious matters, perhaps, more than others, we carelessly turn our words loose, to wander anywhere in the direction of our meaning. And besides, there is a becoming and reverential reticence, a modest unwillingness to bring the highest and most sacred words into common use, which makes it natural rather to hint than to express our meaning. It is hence, perhaps, that so many well-meaning people choose to speak of having found peace, and having been made happy, as if these were the fullest expression for the life divine, when St. Paul would have said, *Ye were washed, ye were sanctified, ye were justified;* or, still more boldly, *It was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me.* Let us grant that no error is intended when people speak thus, and make a past finding of peace, or a present experience of happiness, identical with walking

humbly with our *God.* But, surely, error may be conveyed to ignorant and careless hearers, who will begin to analyse their own feelings instead of seeking to behold the Lamb. Surely, others, passionately yearning for release from burning shames and cruel thraldoms, and for the vision of the face of God in righteousness, may turn away dissatisfied from so epicurean a statement of the work of grace, from the thrusting of that peace which is one result of salvation, into the room of salvation itself from appetites and fears and sins. Surely, also, the seeker of God may be discouraged and confused who learns that he is no true believer until he has found peace, while it is certain that he will never enjoy a real peace until he has consented to first become a believer, even

> "'Tho' tossed about
> With many a feeling, many a doubt,
> Fightings and fears within, without."

But why should we cry shame on the Romanist, as dishonouring Christ by trusting

in his own works, if we ourselves trust in our emotions? His reliance is at least upon something practical, something which tells for good upon the world, while ours is upon a mere private, and perhaps even selfish, mental agitation.

It may be answered that the Romanist trusts to his works to bring salvation, just as really as the clouds bring the rain; while we only trust in feeling as a sign, an indication, like the falling mercury which indicates the rain. And the distinction is just. But this cardinal truth must be insisted on, that our spiritual condition does not rise and fall with our emotions, nor is it measured by them: it depends wholly upon our willing acceptance of Christ as the Saviour, not only of our souls from punishment, but of our lives and hearts from sin. If we wish to assure our hearts there is but one infallible way: by returning to the promises, and to the Lord of the promises, by giving up all for Christ, as *at the beginning* of our experience, and walking *in Him as* we then received Him.

It is rarely, perhaps, that the error we speak of goes so far as we have suggested to be possible. But it may be necessary, not seldom, to rein it in by sore discipline and bitter suffering. Our Father removes the enjoyments which are in danger of supplanting Him, and leaves His child to grope in the dark, to wonder what means the change that seems so stern, and to get him to his God right humbly. As an oculist shuts out the sun from a diseased eye, that it may learn hereafter to endure its rays, so are spiritual enjoyments taken away when they would inflame our self-esteem, to be restored when they will be received with meekness. The eye is morbid when it begins to obtrude the consciousness of its own vision upon that of the loveliness revealed; and so is the soul, when it cannot forget its attainment of delights, in the love which it professes to delight in.

Many years ago, a young curate was in daily attendance upon a dying lady—one of the excellent of the earth. Some fancied resemblance between him and a son who had died

after ordination led her to admit him, and no other clergyman, to the chamber where the shadow of a slow and languishing disease hung heavily upon her spirits. She was certain that all her life had been one delusion; God would sustain her now if she were His, but she had no comforts, no support or sense of victory; she was alone, and, therefore, she was rejected. This was a new and heavy trial for an inexperienced youth. After many failures to comfort her, and much prayer for guidance, he one day said, "I am going to ask you a startling question. Do not stop to blame its boldness, but answer frankly. What if it were proposed to you to renounce Christ, as you believe He has renounced you, and to take the advice of Job's wife, *Curse God and die?*" With startling rapidity and earnestness she said, "God forbid! Curse God, who has given me everything! Renounce Christ, who died for me! Whatever He does, He is Christ still." There was a long pause. Her face brightened all over; *for* she felt that she had refuted herself, and

her adviser said, "Let us, at all events, thank God for one good gift, for surely it is His, which He has not taken from you." The temptation was gone for ever. She had come back from her demand for emotions to think simply of the preciousness of Him whom her soul loved.

But in the meantime she had, doubtless, needed the hard lesson, and might have gone to her grave—not without love to Christ, not fallen from grace, yet with a far less spontaneous and wholesome experience than she had reached through the gloom. She had been *in heaviness*, since need was, *through manifold temptations.*

Sometimes the same trial is sent not in anger, but, like the affliction of Job, for an opportunity of showing, very nobly, the sustaining power of grace. The saintly Archbishop Leighton wrote (and no less a man than Coleridge found reason to give special thanks to God "for this sweet and strong comforter") :—"In spiritual trials that are the sharpest and most fiery of all, when the furnace is within a man, when God doth not

only shut up His loving kindness from its feeling, but seems to shut it up in hot displeasure, when He writes bitter things against it, yet then to depend upon Him, wait for His salvation, this is not only a true but a strong and very refined faith indeed. . . . Though I saw, as it were, His hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that hand would I expect salvation."

Now, if it be thus perilous for one to measure his own condition by his emotions, it must be till more dangerous to propose such a test to others. That is to bid them turn their thoughts rather on their own frail hearts than on the immutable God, and the covenant which is ordered and sure: if they are rightly happy, it will bend their mind from the source of their happiness to the streams; if they are deluded, it will confirm their errors, and *daub with untempered mortar* the wall that is doomed to fall; if they are unblest, it will occupy them with a symptom rather than with the disease. Sometimes it will *confirm the heart of the wicked that*

he should not return from his wicked way. Sometimes it will *make the heart of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad.*

"I cannot talk with a stranger about myself," said a dying youth of the highest promise, and crowned with the greenest laurels of his university. "So-and-so has left me very tired after investigating my condition for half an hour and I could not say twenty words; to bear witness to myself is not a Christian duty, is it? But, now, sit down, you, and speak to me quietly about our blessed Lord; God knows well that I love Him." We who looked at him saw his face as the face of an angel, and felt that the tremulous words, "God knows well that I love Him," were a better personal testimony than if he had spoken of trances and ecstacies.

We may sum up this argument in the words of the great Christian philosopher already quoted:

"The peace which we have with God in Christ is inviolable; but because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul that is truly at peace with God may for a time

be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that grace, that love and light of God's countenance, on which its tranquillity and joy depend. 'Thou didst hide Thy face,' said David, 'and I was troubled.' But when these eclipses are over, the soul is revived with fresh consolation, as the face of the earth is renewed and made to smile with the return of the sun in spring; and this ought always to uphold Christians in the saddest times —namely, that the grace and love of God towards them depend not on their sense, nor upon anything in them, but is still in itself incapable of the smallest alteration."

5. Once more, *there is danger of impatience.* God leads our souls to Himself by very different ways; and so that we embrace His feet, it matters little whether we have seen the purpose of our lives spoiled, like Saul of Tarsus; or been hurried into abysses of despair, like the jailor; or have had our hearts, like Lydia's, softly opened; or, like the Ethiopian eunoch, have

been led through intellectual perplexity to vital faith. The point is simply that we should yield to Christ the mastery over our hearts, and, through them, also our lives.

But a little reflection will show that in these various conversions the emotions also must have widely varied. The impulse of the great apostle was strangely practical. Has the reader ever put himself into the position of the arrested persecutor, when the hated foe, against whom all his energies were strained to the uttermost, suddenly struck him down, flaming upon him from the skies? Has he ever thought how many cries of terror, how many passionate confessions of guilt and prayers for pardon should he have uttered, before daring to speak the words of frank submission and of vigorous hope?

*What shall I do, Lord?** The grandeur of Paul's future faith was already implicit in that question, which implied that Jesus of Nazareth,

* The Revised Version has still left this question in Acts xxii. 10, though not in the parallel passages.

whom he persecuted, would receive his
service and his bloodstained life. Lydia
simply moved to gentle gratitude and won
desire to be serviceable to her benefactors
the Ethiopian chamberlain had a statesr
consciousness that a believer in the Me
should be formally admitted into His king

To the jailor, on the contrary, there must
come a rush of profound delight at rescue
impending ruin ; and it is conceivable that
then, in the handful of Philippian con
men of other temperaments, led by ways
thoughtful than impulsive, may have a
whether they enjoyed the same grace as l
the rapture of that sudden revulsion
despair to faith.

For, it is certain that quiet and thoug
Christians of our own day, reading of passi
conversions, are apt to distrust their own, fc
ting that all keen excitements must soon
languid, and cannot, therefore, be esser
forgetting the multitude of practical, ho
duties with which strong agitations woul

inconsistent; forgetting that the peace of being pardoned and reconciled is an unspeakable blessing even when it is a quiet one; and, above all, forgetting that our walk through life must be *by faith, and not by sight*, nor by any such continuance of vivid and direct apprehension as would, equally with the evidence of the senses deprive faith in the unseen of its ascendency.

Such people, reading of the saints of other times and the enjoyments vouchsafed to them, and wondering at the comparative monotony of their own lives, come to distrust the reality of their religion, and so fall from the other side into the same snare which sometimes (we have seen) entangles the feet of the brightest when their souls are overclouded. The same illusion is produced by the record of the happy seasons of happy lives, as by looking along a line of pillars, where at a little distance the intervals are unseen, and the appearance is that of a solid, unbroken wall. So it is that we forget the vicissitudes of the experience of the saints, the battles they fought, the fears they confronted

before attaining their unshaken courage, and unquenchable hope, and unbroken consciousness of the invisible. We also must begin as recruits for the army in which we hope to become veterans. We must not sigh, as we gird on our harness, for the laurels which are already twined for those who shall presently take their harness off.

CHAPTER V.

UPON THE CONTROL OF OUR EMOTIONS.

WE have just seen it to be unreasonable to expect always the enjoyments of which we read, or to be discouraged because we have them not. We proceed to observe that our want of them is often wilful, our emotions being much more under our own control than most people imagine. In matters which do not concern the soul, this is almost proverbially true. Worldly people exhort each other to shake off dull care,

to banish melancholy, to drive away sorrow. And when the Scripture says, *Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord: rejoice in the Lord alway; again I will say Rejoice*, we are clearly taught that the soul of a Christian has a considerable power of governing its own emotions. It is true that we cannot rejoice in the Lord simply by striking a mental attitude, and saying, "Now I will be joyful;" but we can do so by feeding our minds with those reflections which naturally excite a rational and holy gladness.

There is a remarkable incident of the Old Testament which curiously illustrates this important principle. The Jews had returned from exile, few and feeble, ignorant of the Law, forgetful of their ancient institutions. The rise of the Temple from its ashes had been slow and mean. The city wall, rebuilt by men who grasped the sword of self-defence even while their trowels rang, enclosed great empty spaces.

In such circumstances, one can picture to himself the little crowd which assembled to hear Ezra the Scribe read aloud the long-neglected

Law. *We* know that the seed of the futur of the world was there; that from them, a touching the flesh, Christ should come; that thei beliefs were the germ of the everlasting Gospel But *they* only saw the gloomy and threatenin facts of the moment. Begirt by bitter and un relenting foes, and by millions of worshippers o other gods, they stood, a handful of servants o Jehovah, tributaries to the foreigner whos caprice might tread out like a spark thei half-peopled and dreary little town. *Behol we are servants in the land that Thou gaves unto our fathers, and it yieldeth much increas unto the kings whom Thou hast set over u because of our sins: also they have dominio over our bodies and over our cattle at thei pleasure, and we are in much distress.*

A cloud of uncertainty, danger, and condemn ation for sin hangs over them; there is littl sense of festivity in that assembly; and as th Law is read, the storm-cloud seems to darken for they know that it has not been kept; the despair of the help of heaven, and there is n

help for them on earth. *All the people wept when they heard the word of the Lord.*

It is, then, amid spiritual as well as temporal discouragements that Nehemiah and Ezra and the priests come forward and urge them not to weep, since it is the time of a holy festival; but to rejoice, to eat and drink of the best, and to see that the poorest share with them. *For*, say they, *the joy of the Lord is your strength;* or rather, perhaps, *joy in the Lord is your fortress.*

From this graphic story there are many lessons to be learned.

1. It teaches how to control our feelings. If we indulge too much a dreary view of life, which may possibly be correct enough in due proportion, melancholy emotions will keep company with these dismal trains of thought. If we make an effort, and resolutely turn our minds to sunnier and healthier themes, our hearts will brighten with our meditations. Even feelings which are pure and laudable must not be allowed to tyrannise over the soul, and expel other feelings, equally pure and laudable, from

share in our hearts, any more than our t
upon the Incarnation or the Atoneme
exclude from our minds the Royalty of C
heaven and earth.

It was right that Israel should lame
sins and their humiliation, and in tl
chapter inspiration has immortalised the
cry of anguish. Even now it was proper
that they should mourn for sin; but tl
not to be their chief and special avoca
must give way to another and a gladde
for though *Israel had destroyed himse
God was his help found.* They were
in God their *Saviour. Joy in the*
to be *their fortress.*

And we read that they actually
tears and went their way *to eat and
send portions, and to make great m
they had understood the words tl
clared unto them.* It was in the
grief, and even of religious grief, tl
concourse thus, by a strenuous
the gladness of trust and to joy in

Now, these emotions are not more contradictory to-day than in ancient Jerusalem, and the self-control, the resolute and successful struggle for one state of feeling rather than another, which was possible for the subjects of Nehemiah, is not beyond our attainment.

There are times when the best remedy for spiritual depression would be some voice as clear and distinct as Nehemiah's and Ezra's were—not exhorting nor condoling with us at all, but boldly and with authority commanding us to be of good cheer.

2. But religious cheerfulness was not only enjoined as their occasional relief; it should also be their lasting strength. *The joy of the Lord* was *their fortress.* Nor can we doubt that even in their saddest hour of affliction and abasement, when the sweet things and the fat were far away, still they were comforted and strengthened by the thoughts of their covenant God. Without Him they could not have borne up against the strain and pressure of their hindrances for one week—nay, for one

single day. He emboldened them to resist Sanballat and the Samaritans. His invisible support inflamed their ardour, and the storms of tribulation only fanned the fire. And it is always so. A gloomy and despondent Christian is not likely to be a steadfast one. If he cannot think any bright and hopeful thought of God, how shall he look for victory when *the enemy cometh in as a flood?* As I know of myself that I am full of sin, and that my own heart is treacherously kind to the tempter, how then, while Satan presses me sore, and his arrows stick fast in me, shall I *stand fast in the evil day*, without some cheering and joyous recollection of what God has done, what He has promised, and what He Himself actually, and in His very essence, is revealed to be?

3. Observe that they are not taught the advantages of natural cheerfulness, nor bidden merely to shake off their despondency and hope for better times to come. Men's temperaments are, indeed, as different as their faces, and some are naturally fearful, easily depressed, and

overcome with gloom; while the cheerfulness of others is merely animal, or else based on self-esteem, and the notion that, for powers like their own, things cannot go entirely wrong. Such a temper will often carry a man far in this world, for no doubts will stop him until he has reached the true limit of his abilities; but what has this to do with a religion of self-abasement and contrition? Animal spirits are not the grace of God.

4. Nor were they taught to rejoice because they had, after all, attained a good deal of success. If the town was poor, yet it was Jerusalem, the sacred city; and if the walls were weak, and the Temple humble, still they were there; the captivity was over, the ramparts and the holy house were built. All this was genuine matter of encouragement, but nothing of all this was given to them as the reason why they should rejoice.

And if by God's grace we are enabled to feel not only our sinfulness, but also our improvement, our release from the dominion of some

deadly temptation, the quenching of some fiery dart which Satan hurls at us, we may well thank God and take courage; but yet these experiences must not be the foundation of our trust. Not the joy of his own attainments, any more than the lightness of his own heart, may sustain the Christian when heavy with his armour, faint with wounds, and beset with enemies upon his march to God. No. Ours is *the joy of the Lord* Himself: in Him we have to trust, even our covenant God, reconciled by the cross of Jesus.

5. For this joy of the Lord is not reliance merely in such a God of goodness as nature reveals to us. Apart from Revelation, one must find it hard to trust very implicitly to Him whose word is fulfilled by *blight and famine*, by *storm and earthquake*, who launched the shark into the waters, and let loose the tiger in the wood. Beyond doubt the God of Nature is beneficent. The mingling of severity with His goodness harmonises exactly with the Christian *doctrine* that our world is fallen, and it does

not for a moment conflict with our belief that He is willing, for all who accept His method, finally to restore the Paradise from which we are so plainly exiled now. But the time is for ever gone when a philosophic deism could believe at once in a perfect God and an unfallen creation. The Lord of Nature may well be trusted if He has pledged His word; but without a promise we tremble, we know not what to say.

6. To these Jews, however, the joy of the Lord was the joy of a covenant God. "They made great mirth because they had understood the words that were declared unto them." Yes, they had broken His precepts, yet they were His covenant people still. He had given them this very feast to remind them of His love to their fathers wandering in tents, and He was the same to-day. The Law which alarmed them, itself proclaimed their special rank as the Israel of God. They must forgive themselves, since He forgave them. Let them take heart, and be strong as in the old times, so should

they sing in the day of battle, *the Lord is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.* And with such boldness and confidence to look to Him for succour in peril and strength in toil, they would have that confidence and enthusiasm which is already half the victory; and when their enemies came in as a flood, they would stand firm as a rock; the joy of the Lord would be their fortress.

Now, surely, we can supply our hearts more richly and amply than these ancient Jews with the incitements to spiritual joy. Blessed are the ears which hear the things which we hear, for many kings and prophets have desired to hear these things, and have not heard them. The patron God of the Jews is now *the God of the whole earth*, and *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;* and He *commendeth His own love for us* by a proof they never knew, *in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* To believe that He *was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself* might well be joy to the saddest heart, and medicine to heal every

wound. If our sins and failures not only grieve us (as they ought to do), but strive to terrify us away from God, we can still say, *the Lord hath done great things for us already whereof we are glad:* He has given us pardon as often as we have truly sought it; we never asked for comfort and were sent empty away, or for strength and were given over to the enemy, or for bread and received a stone.

Can any battle that remains to be fought prove hotter than that ancient conflict when for us He *trod the winepress alone*, and *dyed all His raiment?* Is it a greater thing for the Father to give us heaven than to have *given His only-begotten Son?*

Why, then, apart from seasons of especial trial, are we so quickly disquieted, so easily dejected? Because we live too much in the present, in events, in the world apart from God; because we are faithless, irresolute, forgetful of the past through which we were *led as a horse in the wilderness that we should not stumble*, and of the future with its immortal joys. The

Psalmist asked himself this very question, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?* And he appealed against his unreasonable fears alike to expectation and experience; *Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God.* Surely we may do the same.

Discouragement, and the clamour of the heart for large and instant enjoyments, should be met by patience. It is written that *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance.* Now, the fruits bear not the root, but the root them; time is needed for their ripening; and Christ Himself has taught us in St. Mark's parable of the seed growing secretly, that His work often proceeds silently and by degrees from an obscure and feeble germ. Instead of complaining when our joys are undeveloped, let us beware lest our neglect or *worldliness* deprive the blossom of the sunlight

and the rains which would speed on the fruit. And let us ask our hearts whether we really desire joy as an evidence of acceptance or only as an indulgence. If we long for it as a grace, why are we not at least as anxious for those other graces which bless our families and the Church, for *long-suffering*, *kindness*, and the rest, as for this which blesses our own heart? Some of these fruits we ourselves may evidently help to ripen. *Love*, *meekness*, *and temperance* are absolutely enjoined on us, and must, therefore, be at our command by the help of the Holy Spirit. Now, it is often the case that a little more attention to the graces which are also duties would obtain for us a larger share of the graces which are indulgences. *If ye love Me ye will keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.* What an instructive order of events, from love to obedience, and from obedience on to blessedness! But how little realised in the popular religious teaching of our day! Yet the same train of cause and effect—submission

leading on to privilege—is pressed on us a second time within a few verses by our Lord. *If any man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love Him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.* Such is the Divine law : the Saviour's own account of *what is come to pass, that* He will *manifest* Himself *unto us and not unto the world.*

The many graces of which we have just read St. Paul's list are not said to be various fruits, but as if one group, all hanging on one stem, *the fruit of the Spirit.* And the most successful culture will be that which brings each grape in this cluster of Eshcol to maturity along with all the rest. While we are unloving, or unkind, or untrustful, or hot-tempered, or extreme, we shal do well to strive to attain the virtues we need and then the smile of Christ on His obedient child will make sweet and full the companion fruit of *joy* and *peace.* For the principle is even now at work which will be fully developed when our Master shall say, *Thou hast been faithful over a few things . . . enter into the joy of thy Lord.*

Our rebellious emotions will often be most successfully controlled by being ignored. Whatever I feel, the facts continue to be the same, and I have really to do with the Atonement and Christ who made it, with pardon and the Father who is reconciled, with holiness and the Spirit who bestows it, facts which my varying and treacherous heart neither obtained nor can discover; but which I know from the *everlasting* Gospel, and the *Covenant ordered in all things and sure.*

And, although it is true that doubt and fear may indicate some weakness of my faith, yet I must remember that the greatest faith is not the same thing as the greatest and most useful exercise of whatever faith I now possess; and in truth I may glorify my Lord more, and win a nobler victory, by trusting while I am oppressed than when I am exalted.

It often happens, when an inexperienced swimmer wearies, that he seems to himself to make no progress whatever. And the sensation

is curious enough of being alone in a pool or river, and fancying that, after a dozen or two of strokes, the shore is as far away as before. If one gives way to panic, he will then imagine that he cannot breathe. His mouth is above water, no doubt; but the effort to draw breath is almost more than he can make. But he reflects that water is still buoyant, that as long as he thrusts it backward he must himself advance, that the air must fill his lungs when they expand, and in a few minutes he is safe upon the shore, having trusted his life to natural laws, and experienced the truth that these do not vary with our feelings. Neither do the laws of grace. Perhaps we are in useful sorrow—*in heaviness, if needs be*—that we may think less hereafter of all treacherous and variable sources of comfort, and learn to trust more, like the swimmer, what is unchangeable. As he reflected that, when his nerve was shaken, water did not cease to be buoyant, so we remember that, however feeling ebbs and flows, we have *fled for consolation* to *immutable things wherein it is*

not possible for God to lie, that the Atonement is made, that *God is love*, that Christ *continueth faithful*. Let us rest in Him, not in our sensations, and the attainment of victory will be the truest remedy for our depression.

The Epistle to the Hebrews gives a similar illustration from the race-course. The author thinks of that weariness which creeps over our souls as over a runner when the dusty way seems endless, and his heart is beating heavily and fast. He reminds us that we cannot *run the race that is set before us* by a spurt—an enthusiastic, momentary effort; but *with patience*. And he teaches us that patience will not be had by watching each step, by thinking of our labour and toil; but by gazing, across the interval which separates us from the goal, to Him who at first inspired our trust, and by whom only it can be crowned. We did not begin by thinking of our strength or swiftness; we thought of Christ only.

And the whole race must be run in exactly the same spirit, *looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.*

In the Epistle to the Colossians, we are reminded of a time when it was impossible for us to dream of any hope except from Christ Himself. Without merit, without a plea, we took Him for our Saviour and were blest. And we are bidden to continue to live so. *As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and builded up in Him, and stablished by your faith.* Hence, it appears that the secret of a happy and prosperous religion is one with the secret of conversion, and we are to go forward as we began. Then we let all our worth, all our attainment, all our self-complacencies fall down, that we might embrace with both hands the cross. *What things were gain* to us, we *counted loss for Christ.* He *was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.* We did not say, I am happy and therefore I believe, for as yet we were not so; but we were content to believe because Jesus had died and risen again, and called us, and was true. Has he become less precious to us since then?

"O happy band of pilgrims,
If onward ye will tread
With Jesus as your Fellow,
To Jesus as your Head."

Is it thus that we are treading, and do we ***walk in Him*** who has said, ***I am the way?*** Are we ***rooted in Him*** also, our souls which crave nourishment being fed from Him like trees from the soil, which their roots grasp, and whence flows all their sap? While our lives thus advance by Him, and our necessities thus lay hold on Him, are we, moreover, ***builded up in Him***, as stones laid passively on the foundation-stone? Thus the life of progress, of nutrition and growth, and of dependence are all in this great verse made to proceed from Jesus.

Now, to remember this truth, that religion is nothing less than the dependance of the soul upon a living Person, its loving submission to Him, and its liberal support by His bounty, will defeat all the attempts of Satan to intoxicate us when our feelings are excited, or to spoil our faith when they are dull.

Sometimes it will even be wise to take the accuser at his word, again and again, as frankly as we did at first, when we pleaded guilty to every charge. Then he told us we were unworthy and undone, and we contested none of his accusations, but simply *received Christ Jesus the Lord* for the pardon of all our sin. Well, then, let us *so walk in Him.* If Satan whispers that all our past experience is one delusion, we may answer—At the worst, I bring my soul to Jesus now: whether I have formerly been deceived or not, I now answer His gracious call, and He will not send me empty away. If Satan upbraids us with our ingratitude, the good we have left undone, the evil, alas, that we have done, and if he farther darkens the dark record by confusing infirmities with sins, and binding on our conscience burdens which the Lord has not imposed; yet we need not stay to dispute the amount of our debt, or to cut down some items, when we can pay nothing. Let every accusation bring us back to our all-gracious *Master, to* the marvellous compassion which

wearies not, and the fountain that is ever open.

As at first, with empty hands, with no claim except upon compassion and its promises, let us renew our self-surrender, and confess our sins, and we shall find Him *faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

It is instructive to observe with what delight the oldest saint sings the same hymn as the youngest seeker after peace :—

> "In my hand no price I bring;
> Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

Are these the words of the child or the young man or the father in Jesus Christ? They belong equally to all. No saint refuses to sing—

> "Just as I am, without one plea
> But that Thy blood was shed for me,
> And that Thou biddest me come to Thee.
> O Lamb of God, I come."

For no saint thinks very much of his own

for grace otherwise than as
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ight ebb like the tides, and
aith itself away with them,
swing it could not drift if it

And what a story it is to rebuke our fear! What a work achieved for us! What a mighty Saviour, crowned in heaven, upon whom to *cast all our anxieties!*

In this state of happy and simple trust, what room is left, one might ask, for the means of grace to occupy? Say, rather, to what new dignity and high station are they at once exalted.

The soul whose happiness consists in no vain-glorious, personal elevation, but in trustful waiting upon Christ, will not lightly be absent from the House of God, of which it no longer thinks chiefly as a place for hearing sermons, or for repeating orthodox old words of prayer, but more than all, as a place where men gather in the name of Christ, of whom therefore Christ has said *there am I in the midst of them.* The more clearly we understand that all our happiness is from Him, the more reverentially we shall approach, and the more highly value, the place where He has set His name.

Shall we, again, neglect our Bible because we

have learned that life comes not from the reading, however attentively, of any book, however sacred, but from Christ Himself? Not so if we follow aright the Saviour's own line of thought. He complains, indeed, that *ye search the Scriptures* on a false system, *because ye think* that *in them ye have eternal life*, and so rest content and *will not come to Me that ye may have life.* But He does not blame the Scriptures on this account. He distinctly attributes the noblest function to even these Old Testament books, and says that they are not only a testimony to Him among a crowd of others, but a unique and pre-eminent testimony—*these are they who witness of Me.*

How, then, shall I neglect this crowning volume where every word of His lips, and every action of His life on earth, declares to me the heart of Him whom to know is life eternal?

And whatever theory of the sacraments we may entertain in this unhappy and distracted time, we shall not honour Christ by quite *forgetting* that *all we who were baptised into*

Christ Jesus were baptised into his death: we were buried therefore with Him through baptism unto death. One who loves Christ will sometimes ponder the event in his own life, whereof such great words may in any conceivable sense be spoken. And also he will be drawn to the place where he is bidden to feed upon Christ in his heart by faith, and where the memory of His precious death and passion takes outward form and appeals to the very senses.

None can honour and love the means of grace more intensely than he who finds in each of them a voice to tell him of Jesus, and a finger to point him upward to the high place where *in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders*, is *a Lamb standing as though it had been slain.*

Such helps we have to kindle, to purify, and to regulate our emotions, as we think of God, and press towards *the place where* His *honour dwelleth.*

Let us add, briefly and with awe, that not one

of all these agencies is left unaided, to succeed or fail by its own strength.

To all these is given Thy help, O Spirit of Comfort and Might, who art the vital energy within us of all good; without whom we remember not, nor trust, nor rejoice, nor love; who workest in every agent, and without an agent canst inspire life and joy into our fainting hearts!

And He is promised to them that ask.

Would that some unction from the Holy One may rest upon this book, and cause it to strengthen some fearful soul, *to give the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*, and to teach some trembling Christian, who now hears through the silence only the throb of his excited heart, to catch the voice of Him who says, *Ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

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